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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6726
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA IMMEDIATE 6992
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE 0086
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 0134
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR IMMEDIATE 0697
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0577
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA IMMEDIATE 0108
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000333

SIPDIS

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STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2016
TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLS](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP # 17

REF: LAGOS 327

Classified By: Acting Political/Economic Chief Shannon Ross
for reasons 1.4 (D/E).

Hostage Welfare Update

¶1. (C) There has been no additional confirmed information about the condition of the remaining hostages. Delta State Governor Ibori is obtaining new photographs to demonstrate proof of life.

Hostage Negotiations

¶2. (S/NF) Delta State Governor Ibori told British Deputy High Commissioner (DHC) the three remaining hostages would be released in the next few days and that the hostage-takers had reduced their demands to the federal government. He said the hostage takers' demands had strong political overtones. For further update on these demands see TD 314/15773-06 dated 4 March.

¶3. (C) DHC and other sources do not believe Ibori is in direct contact with the top echelon of the hostage-takers. Regarding demands for hostage release, Ibori told DHC the long-term developmental demands are problematic because he does not believe the Delta State government has sufficient funds to carry out needed projects. On the larger political demands, he said the President would have to address them, but that he would send the President a list of individuals for inclusion on a future hostage release negotiation committee.

Energy Update: Shell Facilities Still Closed

¶4. (C) There is no change in the status of damaged or closed Shell facilities, and production remains reduced approximately 550,000 bpd. Shell reported it is still unable to assess damage to the Forcados crude loading platform. Shell reported the Agge and Agoro manifolds on the TransRamos pipeline were attacked on Saturday, March 4, but production remains unaffected because the pipeline had been closed due to an earlier attack. Power generation remains down by approximately 1000 MW (of a total of 3200 MW nationwide).

¶5. (C) A Shell representative told Econoff the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is expanding recruitment efforts in Soku and Bonny Island, Rivers State.

Military Update

¶6. (S) Military sources told us the Nigerian military will not expand operations or provoke any further violence in the region until the hostages are released. They appeared confident that the hostages would be released within the next few days.

Media Update

¶7. (SBU) Media reports were dominated by accounts of MEND's

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threats to reduce the country's oil production by an additional one million bpd during March in a campaign styled "Operation Oiled Venom". This Day reported a MEND email stating "there will be inland operations in March as well as standard creek attacks". Some media accounts indicate MEND will expand operations east. Vanguard featured Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) President Bello Oboko stating he would not return to the creeks for the remaining three hostages unless he received a firm commitment by the federal government to discuss broader political and economic demands made by the militants. Oboko complained in the press that the negotiating committee did not have sufficient negotiating authority to address any of the militant's demands. One leading daily reported that AmCit hostages are ill. Another highlighted the decline in national power availability.

Consular Update

¶8. (C) There have been no reports of additional attacks on AmCits. One mission Conoff and FEST member are in Warri monitoring negotiations and prepared to assist with repatriation.

Comment

¶9. (C) This weekend's renewed threats have clearly made Shell and other major energy firms nervous. Unfortunately, MEND generally has a good track record of hitting its numerical targets for reducing Nigerian oil production, even if it does so later rather than sooner. In our assessment, MEND has demonstrated the operational capability to meet its new target as well. While the latest threats have not been specifically confirmed as originating with MEND, the group has a well-established track record of disseminating its threats via the media. If MEND moves its operations eastwards in the Niger Delta to target Shell on-shore and near-shore operations in Rivers State, and large oil export

and liquefied natural gas facilities on Bonny Island, it could find its latest target within comfortable reach. End comment.

HOWE